447-A-1

HE 23.3002:In2/7/exec.sum.

AUG 11 1988

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project, "Keys to Access -- Creating Inclusive Systems," was to identify and synthesize the causal factors in the decline of Pacific/Asian participation in Older Americans Act programs. The project's primary goal was to ultimately improve minority participation in aging prgrams. To accomplish this herculean goal, the Center proposed obtaining information regarding the problem of reduction in the number of older Pacific/Asian participants and to develop strategies for resolving the problem. The project extended over a 15-month period.

To accomplish its goals, the National Pacific/Asian Resource Center on Aging proposed the following:

1. To obtain consumer-based information regarding the problems of reduction in the number of older Pacific/Asian participants in OAA programs.

2. To develop recommendations and strategies for resolving the problems.

To ensure the successful outcome of the Project, the following objectives were undertaken:

1. To identify three areas in the United States that have experienced significant drops in Pacific/Asian participation.

2. To conduct three focus group sessions to synthesize the problems of nonparticipation by the Pacific/Asian population and to identify solutions.

3. To identify action recommendations from the client-centered information.

4. To provide technical assistance to three targeted Area Agencies on Aging in three states utilizing the model components developed by the Center.

Heretofore, no information has been generated that reflects the causal factors in the drop of Pacific/Asian participants in OAA programs -- and minimal information is available on the impact of targeting in the Pacific/Asian elderly population. Through this Project, information was sought that would address both program issues. Moreover, such information was to be ascertained from the consumer directly. The informants were to be given the opportunity to have input in developing

COMPLETED

strategies to correct the problems. The Project also was intended to provide concrete information regarding the depth of the programs that would assist the Administration on Aging in determining short/long-range program planning.

II. METHODOLOGY

Utilizing a methodology conceived as a business management tool, focus groups, the Center was able to document the reasons for low-participant levels in Older Americans Act programs by Pacific/Asians. New immigrant and refugee populations were targeted for the three sites selected across the country. These groups represent high-risk vulnerable populations.

The sites were selected on the basis of geographical and demographic differences. Different populations were targeted for each site to determine the depth of the problems and the cross-cutting significance of such problems from one sub-set to another. Originally, it was intended that five sites be selected; however, due to time and funding constraints, three sites were finally selected. The West Coast was not included in the sampling as most studies have been conducted in that region, and the outcomes are greatly skewed by the disproportionate clustering of Pacific/Asian populations in the area.

III. PLANNING PROCESS

We found that in order to convene the focus groups, several community meetings had to be conducted: first, with the Area Agency on Aging, and then with community leaders together with the Area Agency on Aging. It is still a practice to pay deference to community leadership. It not only acknowledges their position in the community, but it provides one the opportunity to impart the technical knowledge and background to the leadership so that they can maintain their roles and also track others. They greatly assist the process as they embody the needed trust to create the linkage. However, gaining their trust and confidence is difficult, but necessary.

The planning meetings incorporated three facets of the usual program development process: establishing trust, providing technical assistance, and defining roles. Since the area agencies on aging had not used the focus group methodology previously, it was necessary to brief the staff on the process. There was some reluctance on the part of the area agency on aging staff and community leaders because they were not versed in the procedures. Moreover, concern regarding outcomes also played a part in the initial reticence of the area agencies on aging. Unlike corporations which use these means to better their own

internal operations, the area agencies on aging were experiencing this procedure as an external evaluation mechanism.

The bilingual factor added to the complexity; the planning meetings were added because it was difficult to communicate by telephone to all the leaders. The importance of using community leaders in organizing cannot be stressed enough. It is one step that is not always necessary in the larger society. Bringing them together in a formal setting such as a meeting establishes, in the eyes of the larger society, their place in the community with their peers.

IV. RESULTS

A. AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

One of the largest Area Agencies on Aging in the network, New York City has an ornate bureaucracy with self-contained operating units for each of its geographic regions called boroughs. This area agency on aging was selected for a variety of reasons. It had recently started a Korean nutrition site in Queens that had some unique aspects that would provide the Project with vital information. For example, it could provide invaluable information on how to start a new program and the reasons why communities and individuals do not participate in Older Americans Act programs.

The Region II area agency on aging responded to a joint national search letter from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and the Center requesting area agencies on aging to participate in the program. However, because the minority population is small in their catchment area, they recruited the Chicago and Suburban Cook County area agencies on aging to collaborate. Working with three different area agencies on aging assisted the Center in consolidating its efforts and maximizing its capital outlay.

The Center was asked by the Houston Area Agency on Aging to assist them in their efforts to assess and develop programs in both the Korean and Vietnamese communities. Both communities are comprised of recent arrivals to the United State, i.e.,immigrant and refugee populations.

B. FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

The New York City focus group session and debriefing was conducted in Flushing, New York on June 15, 1987. The participants in the group were all Korean elders and the session lasted for two (2) hours. In a preplanning session, the moderator's guide was modified in order to relate to the specific "community" involved.

The second focus group was convened in Chicago, Illinois on July 10, 1987. Participants were drawn from several Pacific/Asian communities, specifically Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Japanese. This necessitated working through multiple interpreters.

The final focus group session was conducted in Houston, Texas on December 15, 1988. Participants represented the Vietnamese, Korean, and East Indian communities. Two interpreters were utilized, and the moderator had a limited opportunity to meet with them prior to the session.

The problem with translation was major in New York, but was experienced in all sessions. As noted in the transcripts, the translator did not properly interpret either questions or responses, which limited follow-up questions and frustrated the group process. This experience reinforced the need to improve the teamwork between the moderator and translator. However, working through one translator as opposed to multiple translators (as in Chicago and Houston) is preferred and considered more effective.

Many of the obstacles identified through the project were those which have traditionally been forwarded: language, lack of knowledge and information, fear, isolation, and unfamiliarity with the service systems. However, subtleties, such as non-recognition of community leadership status, lack of understanding of protocol and ritual, lack of knowledge of old world political biases, and the misinterpretation of verbal responses were de facto obstacles to participation.

Moreover, the de facto obstacles played a more important role in minimizing participation. The interjection of a technical expert into the process validated the important role of such obstacles. The Center found that in its role as the mediator, it was able to create the necessary interface between the service system and the indigenous Pacific/Asian groups. This was demonstrated in two sites in very definitive terms in that two new program strategies were initiated.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

- That Congress initiate a series of oversight hearings of the refugee resettlement program and lack of adequate English classes and qualified translators.

- That the U.S. Administration on Aging, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Department of Labor jointly fund model projects targeted at removing the language barrier to equal service access.

- That the Department of Labor fund special projects under Title V of the Older Americans Act to train and place older translators.

- That AoA encourage State Units and Area Agencies on Aging to provide targeted technical assistance to established minority organizations to assist them in understanding the process of working within the grants-in-aid system. Minority leadership wants to learn but must become knowledgeable of processes as well as programs.

- That AoA fund the dissemination of the National Pacific/Asian Resource Center on Aging's technical assistance materials on how to better access, work with, and serve Pacific/Asian elders. Items which would be addressed would include, but not be limited to the following:

  1. A general outline of the cultural and communication issues of the participants and community leadership, with emphasis on the cultural adaptations of the Pacific/Asian minority communities in the U.S.

  2. A brief summary of any problems or concerns specific to certain service areas based on case studies.

  3. Any other relevant information which could assist AAA's in generating the information necessary to address the stated needs.

- That the Administration on Aging sponsor training seminars, two days in duration, in six geographic areas with large concentrations of Pacific/Asians. The first day would emphasize training and technical assistance to State Units and Area Agencies on Aging. The second day would provide technical assistance to community leaders. Topics to be addressed during these sessions for State Units and AAA's would include but not be limited to:

  1. Cultural Overviews
  2. Orientation to Community Leadership and Dynamics
  3. How to Network with Community Leadership
  4. How to Identify and Solve Problems
  5. How to Organize, Convene, and Conduct Focus Groups
  6. Successful Case Studies and Service Models

- That AAAs serving Asian minority communities be required to hold biannual briefing sessions on the process for obtaining funds, operating services, and complying with reporting requirements; and that minority leadership be encouraged to attend board and

advisory meetings.

- That AoA develop, print, and disseminate basic information books in the various Asian languages; or encourage private foundations to support and fund such efforts. These materials should then be provided to every new immigrant/refugee over the age of 55.

- That model ethnic meal sites be created throughout the United States which serve the dual function of instructing English classes daily. These sites could also serve as focal points.